Holiday Craft Fair Hosted In ʻĀina Haina Home

BY ALLYSON PANG

It's in November when craft fairs become plentiful, blooming in school lawns and exhibition halls to prep people for the coming gift-giving season.

For 44 years, the Holiday Shoppe has offered a different craft fair experience.

This in-home craft fair boutique is set up in Kepola Maii's brother-in-law's home in ʻĀina Haina, featuring both an indoor and outdoor shopping area. In matching custom embroidered aprons, volunteers greet shoppers when they enter the home.

"It's not like your normal craft fair where you come set up a tent, set up a table and then you man your table for the duration of the craft fair," Maii explains. "In our situation, we have about 40 crafters and everybody brings their things and we have a committee who sets up how things are going to be arranged throughout the whole Holiday Shoppe."

The Holiday Shoppe features numerous items — all of which must be handcrafted.

Half of its offerings are Christmas-themed, such as ornaments, mini Christmas trees and wreaths. The other half include pottery pieces, stained glass items, quilts, recyclable bags and totes, pet toys and baked goods.

"We try to keep our items unique, so we try not to have a bunch of duplication," Maii says. "Our goal is to ensure that every craft and product that comes out of the Holiday Shoppe is handcrafted and going to a loving family who's going to enjoy the craft or be able to use it."





(Left and facing page) Shoppers can browse handcrafted items showcased in different displays throughout an ʻĀina Haina home.

PHOTOS COURTESY KEPOLA MAII

As a crafter herself, Maii will be selling products for keiki and homemade seasonings, such as habanero sugar, ube sugar, shiitake mushroom salt and her bestselling Hawaiian chile pepper salt.

Each item at the Holiday Shoppe has a tag unique to its crafter. At the checkout area, all the tags are cut off and given to a group who sorts the tags between 40 individual buckets.

After the Holiday Shoppe closes for the year, Maii and other volunteers will count up the tags in each bucket to get the total amount owed to each crafter.

While it's a manual way of doing things, Maii says she doesn't mind since it's a once-a-year ordeal and ultimately, it's fun.

Since the Holiday Shoppe started in Mānoa in 1980, it has since gone through more than 40 years of changes in hosts, locations and how its run.

Maii says it started when most craft fairs were at elementary schools and big craft fairs didn't exist yet. So, a group of women got together and began selling their crafts out of a house.

It would move to Kāhala, then to Lanikai and then Niu Valley. It was in 2003 when the Maii family offered to host it at their ʻĀina Haina





home and it has been there ever since.

This is the first year that they've shifted to sending email invites rather than through snail mail. They've also forgone accepting paper checks, and now only accept cash or card. After remodeling a few years ago, shoppers can walk around on ram boards set up throughout the home.

"We used to have people take their shoes off because they were going through the house and then we'd have somebody take the wagon with the shoes and put it in the backyard," Maii says.

The average age of craters is 65. The youngest is Maii's daughter, who is in her 30s. The oldest are in their 80s. In previous years, the Holiday Shoppe had even sold pottery made by a 104-year-old.

Out of all the crafters, Maii says about six or seven are crafters for a living. The rest are mostly retired and do crafting as a hobby.







"It's mostly an interaction thing, a chance to socialize with other crafters, spread some of our abilities and our products with the community," Maii says. "For me, I craft and I do it for a hobby and the fact that I get to sell it and make money back, so that I can reinvest in my crafts — that's all I'm looking for.

"Our lives are all totally different and we come from different walks (of life), different occupations, different ages, different ethnic backgrounds … but we all have one thing in common. We all have crafting," Maii adds. "When we come together for this particular craft fair … and we have a successful fair, (there is) no better feeling than just knowing that almost 1,500 people walked through the house in the last three days … and it's just kind of fulfilling to see that we've shared our interests and our talents with others on the island."

Eventually, the Holiday Shoppe might need a new host home, but for now, Maii says they will continue to hold it in 'Āina Haina for as long as they can.

The Holiday Shoppe will be open 3-8 p.m. on Nov. 14 and 15, and 9 a.m-2 p.m. on Nov. 16 at 5228 Apo Drive.

To learn more or participate in next year's Holiday Shoppe, visit holidayshoppehawaii.com.

